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SENSITIVE  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [RU](#) [KS](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: OPEN SKIES TREATY MISSION IN RUSSIAN FAR EAST  
(18-20 NOVEMBER 2009)

REF: A. 09 STATE 017091  
[1](#)B. MARVIN/EAP EMAIL 11/2/09

Sensitive but Unclassified.

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action cable - see paragraph 4.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary and background. The United States is conducting an Open Skies Treaty flight over the Russian Far East from 18-20 November. The mission is being conducted from Khabarovsk Novyy (ICAO code: UHHH) International Airport, and the flight will cover a route up to 5,900 kilometers. Part of the route is adjacent to the land borders of China and North Korea. As a courtesy to these neighboring countries (China and South Korea), this cable provides background to ensure the flight does not prompt concerns. Ref A was a similar cable for a previous flight in March 2009.

[1](#)3. (U) The Open Skies Treaty enables full territorial, unarmed, overflight of other Treaty partners to build mutual confidence and security, and has no direct connection to civil aviation. Russia is one of 34 State Parties, all of which are in Europe/Eurasia except the United States and Canada. The Treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information through aerial imaging of military forces and activities of concern to them. Open Skies is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to date to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities. End summary and background.

[1](#)4. (SBU) For action posts: Posts are requested to inform host government officials as appropriate concerning this United States Open Skies Treaty mission over the Russian Far East. Post may draw on the points in paragraph 5 below, which if asked, can be left as a non-paper. Post may use pertinent slides from Ref B as a visual aid to describe the mission, but should not/not provide copies to host government officials. Reporting on reactions of host government officials would be welcome, but is not required.

[1](#)5. (U) Begin points:

-- The U.S. is carrying out an Open Skies Treaty flight in the Russian Far East on November 18-20. The mission is being conducted from the Russian airfield Khabarovsk Novyy (ICAO code: UHHH), for a distance of 5,900 kilometers. The mission

will not enter North Korean or Chinese airspace. Part of the mission route is adjacent to land or territorial water borders for northeast mainland China (20 kilometers) and North Korea (60 kilometers). The mission is not in proximity to South Korea itself, but we wanted to make sure Korean officials are aware that the flight is taking place in Russia to the north of North Korea. We are informing you of the mission as a courtesy; the information requires no action on the part of your government.

-- The "Open Skies" regime is a system of territorial overflights to build mutual confidence and security, and has no direct connection to civil aviation. The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of its States Parties. Russia is one of 34 States Parties, all of which are in Europe/Eurasia except the United States and Canada. The Treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information through aerial imaging of military forces and activities of concern to them. Open Skies is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to date to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities.

-- The Open Skies Treaty entered into force in January 2002. Since then, over 630 missions have been conducted between the parties. The United States has conducted over 60 missions over Russia to date, mostly in the West.

-- The Treaty does not permit a flight plan to be closer than 10 kilometers to the border of a non-State Party. The United States aircraft will not image territory beyond Russia's border.

-- The United States uses a dedicated OC-135B aircraft for implementing the Open Skies Treaty. The OC-135B aircraft will operate at altitudes from 35,000 to 36,000 feet and is equipped with optical panoramic and framing cameras permitted by the Open Skies Treaty. According to the Treaty, optical cameras can achieve no better than 30 centimeters ground resolution. The OC-135B is an unarmed aircraft, is not a combat platform and is not engaged in combat operations or training.

-- This mission will be conducted with United States and Russian teams on-board the aircraft.

-- (If asked) The United States aircraft is not an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance asset.

-- If asked about participation on this flight Posts should indicate that we are not able to invite observers on a Treaty mission.

End points.

16. (U) For Moscow and USOSCE: Posts should be aware of this demarche if asked by counterparts.  
CLINTON